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Views and Opinions.

Thomas Hardy—Freethinker.

THE passing of Thomas Hardy removes from the scene the last of the great Victorian novelists. His death furnishes no occasion for special regret. It was not unexpected, his work was finished, he had lived long enough to see himself honoured by all who matter, and his place in English literature is assured. My appetite for poetry is not great, and I should be the last to claim that my judgment in that direction carries with it anything more weighty than the expression of a personal predilection. But in my opinion it is by his prose that Thomas Hardy will live. It is by that he gained fame, and it is by that his fame will be maintained. His poems are not exactly the Wessex novels versified, but much of them read like bits taken from them, in which the author was feeling for a different presentation of the same problems that engaged his attention there. They very often disclose the same turns of expression, and more often still the same thought. I do not question that he had in him the stuff of which great poets are made, but I think his finest poetry is to be found in his prose. This was his earliest medium of expression, and it remained his best.

Some of us are old enough to remember the sensation some of the novels created with their challenge to both religious and social convention. *Tess* offered a challenge in one direction; *Jude* in another. The libraries sometimes tabooed them, and Victorian respectability looked at them askance. For these were not mere photographs of life, such as so many of the more recent novelists give us, and which leave us with the impression that we have been reading an auctioneer's detailed catalogue. They were portraits painted by the hand of a master, and which laid bare the "souls" of the men and women who moved through his pages. We watched them, from start to finish, moved along by the impetus of their own temperament, and under stress of the great im-

personal forces of nature, and the accidental pressure of contingent circumstance.

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The Genesis of a Myth.

Thomas Hardy was a Freethinker. Of that there can be no doubt. Perhaps the clearest evidence of this is to be found in the fact that none of the notices of his death I have seen have said anything about his religious opinions. Those who understand the policy of the English Press will not be slow to appreciate the significance of the general silence. It is certain that he had no belief in the Christian deity or in Christian doctrines. But already one can glimpse the beginning of his posthumous conversion. A local parson, the Rev. H. G. B. Cowley, told one newspaper reporter that "Mr. Hardy was not such an Agnostic as some people imagined," he was also, "sure that he would not have objected to the reading of the burial service at his funeral." There is something quite Christian and parsonic here. It hints at possibilities favourable to the parsons, without saying anything direct. The potentialities are left for the future to develop. What not so much an Agnostic means, I have not the slightest idea. One would imagine a man must either be or not be an Agnostic. It does not seem easy to believe in a bit of God. But what Mr. Cowley wishes us to understand is evident. He wants us to believe that the Thomas Hardy of the novels was not quite identical with the Thomas Hardy of private life. The hint will doubtless be seized upon by many, but for my part I prefer to judge the man by his work rather than by an irresponsible parsonic innuendo. Thomas Hardy never protested against the Freethinking opinions ascribed to him. His repudiation of the Christian view of life was complete. And G. K. Chesterton, with that exquisite taste which characterizes much of that champion of Rome's theological writing, once depicted Hardy as a "village Atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot." In a note to me Hardy expressed his disgust at the offensiveness of the expression, and I do not wonder at it.

* * *

No Room for God.

It is possible to get from the novels some kind of vague belief in the possibility of what is called in the current religious jargon, an "Immanent Will" existing, but if Hardy ever had a belief in even this ghost of a God, he must have pictured it much as the Greeks conceived Fate—a force which held both gods and men in its grip. But in not one of his novels is there room for the operation of the supernatural. He sees life—and it is usually individual life that he sees most clearly, as a link in the long chain of eternal existence. There is no room for the play of what

Christians understand by Providence, and never is there an attempt to palliate facts by holding out a vague hope of some impossible after-life. There is not even the idealization of the religious life that one gets here and there in even such a writer as George Eliot. If Hardy's novels could be made to indicate the faintest trace of their author's belief in a deity, it is a deity who does nothing. He is as helpless as is Jude to avert the course of events. One might take a great deal of what he has written as a satire upon the belief that "He does all things well," a satire written with all the force and intensity of Anatole France, although not so evident of a broad and genial tolerance of the follies and excesses of human nature.

* * *

The Pity of It!

By his will Hardy directed that he should be buried at Stinsford Church. There does not appear to be more in this than the fact that he had a life-long association with the church and the district, and that his first wife was buried in the churchyard. But English Law denies a man property in his dead body—save for purposes of dissection. And a move was made to get the burial in Westminster Abbey. Eventually an agreement was reached that the heart should be buried at Stinsford, the body cremated and the ashes deposited in the Abbey. It is a sign of how far we have travelled that the creator of "Tess" and "Jude" should be buried there, and without a single protest.

Thomas Hardy will not be the only Freethinker whose remains lie in Westminster Abbey, and the fact of its being in some sense a national memorial robs the act of much of its offensiveness. It would be well if this country possessed something in the nature of a national Pantheon, in which might be preserved the memorials to the country's eminent men, free from the label of sectarianism. The Churches see to it that this shall not be the case. Just as they manage to keep a fairly strong controlling hand on education, the press, even the wireless, so they see to it that if we would pay a national tribute to a man who is honoured in art, in science, or in literature, it must be more or less under religious auspices, and must furnish the Churches with some sort of an advertisement. One of these days we may do these things in a more rational and a more dignified manner than they are done at present. But Christianity will have to be much weaker than it is for that amount of intellectual honesty to be manifested in public life.

* * *

Insult or Homage?

One would like to assume that the burial of Thomas Hardy, in Westminster Abbey, indicated a genuine liberalism on the part of the clergy, and a due sense of national responsibilities. But that would be to forget the history of the Christian Church, and its actions in other directions. It is true that Westminster Abbey is a Christian Church, but it should surely not have been impossible to eliminate from the ceremony anything of a strictly Christian character. A proper sense of self-respect, as well as genuine respect to the dead man would have dictated this. The days have gone when the Christian clergy expressed its hatred of the unbeliever by disinterring his body and burning it to gratify Christian malevolence. To-day they are ready to grab the bodies of well known men and repeat over them their meaningless shibboleths. With Thomas Hardy, Freethinker, as with Swinburne and Meredith, Freethinkers, the farce of a Christian ceremony is seen, although in each

case the dead man had no faith in the Christian religion. It is a disgrace that in England the only way in which we can offer an act of homage to a great man is to accompany it with an insult to his memory. Thomas Hardy was given a Christian funeral. One would like to see inscribed over his grave, "He lived an unbeliever; He was buried as a Christian." But we live in a Christian country; and one must not expect too high a level of either moral or intellectual straightforwardness.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Pious People at Play.

"I love conversation, though I never converse.
There must be an audience, and I am the audience."
Disraeli; Lothair.

"Thought is the soul of act."—*Robert Browning.*

It sometimes happens that the little, unobtrusive paragraphs in newspapers, and not the leading articles with the flaring headlines, give the most food for thought to the curious observer of humanity. Important news is generally impersonal, but the little paragraphs deal with individuals. Heavy black type may inform newspaper readers that Zanzibar has purchased another second-hand pleasure steamer to add to its fleet, or that the Government of Monaco has ordered a dozen machine-guns for home defence, but the "news in brief" column is often of more interest.

For example, a New York message states that Miss Maude Royden, the English preacher, has been notified that her lecture engagements in Chicago and Boston have been cancelled owing to her being in favour of smoking by women. Another paragraph from Egypt states that the white chimney-pot hat, worn by the King of Afghanistan, has upset the native priests, and has been the subject of as keen religious controversy as the revised Prayer Book in Britain.

These things happen, mark you, in the year of grace 1928. And, although there is a family likeness between these awful happenings, one takes place in the East, and the other in the Great Republic of the West. In the one case, the fanatics are Mohammedans, and in the other they are hard-shell Christians. So that, it seems that the poet is not always right when he chortles loudly that "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet."

The King of Afghanistan, doubtless, can take care of himself, white pot-hat and all, but Miss Royden has our sympathy. She has left easy-going old London behind, and is breathing the rarer ether of the land of Liberty. Even if breathing is difficult in "God's Own Country," Liberty is real and unmistakable, as solid as the statue at the entrance to New York harbour. And Chicago, with its gallant gunmen and busy bootleggers, is actually to be deprived of the gospel message entrusted to Miss Royden because that excellent lady has a human weakness for an after-dinner cigarette. It is enough to break a critic's heart.

Even a Chicago gunman has his religion, and has his playful moments. At church, doubtless, he can be detected by a close observer, gazing with longing eyes at the missionary box, or appraising the satchels of the ladies in the pews. Fortified by religion, for one brief day in the week, he may restrain temptation, and cut his losses like any sporting gent at Alexandra Park. And the unconscious pew-opener and worshippers never know that the shadow of battle, murder, and sudden death has hovered in their midst. We wish that Miss Royden had her chance to redeem these lost souls. England may be

losing her proud position in the world of sport, but if some prominent gunmen could only be persuaded to forsake the primrose path, things would not be so bad. It would be a proud thing to succeed where even American sheriffs have failed.

As a lady, Miss Royden took the rebuff quietly, but she had her own back. "Smoking and drinking in moderation," she declared to the trembling journalists, "have nothing to do with religion." How many pressmen fainted the report does not mention, but mortality returns will reveal the painful truth.

Because the Americans have radios and motor-cars, adding-machines and cocktails, they are rather apt to regard themselves as radically different and superior to the inhabitants of effete old Europe. They throw flowers at each other to celebrate their enlightenment, and smile and raise their eyebrows at the gross superstitions of the old world. But some of the enlightened citizens of Boston and Chicago are no better than the Moslems in Cairo, who "got the wind up" at the sight of the Afghan monarch's chimney-pot hat, when most of the believers in the Prophet favour a head-gear closely resembling a tea-cosy. It is true that the manifestations of superstition are slightly different in Chicago and in Cairo, but the tendency to be fanatical in the cause of superstition remains the same in the Christian as in the Mohammedan.

Fanaticism pops up in the most unexpected places. I recall a somewhat unusual experience in which Puritan principles had a tremendous, though brief, triumph over time-honoured social customs.

It was at sunny Southend-on-Sea, during the mayoralty of Mr. Chalton Hubbard, a staunch Free Churchman and rigid teetotaler. At the teetotal mayoral banquet, held at the Palace Hotel, in November, all alcohol was anathema, and an excellent repast was vitiated by the introduction of no less than fourteen non-alcoholic beverages, including orangeade, ginger-pop, raspberryade, pineapple, kola, lemonade, and other fearsome drinks. I remember that as the dinner proceeded I sampled some of these (to me) unfamiliar liquids, and soon felt as if I were in a cold storage awaiting execution. Instead of the guests getting more and more friendly and lively they got duller and duller. After the banquet had proceeded some time I gently tilted my chair, and with a friend, beat a retreat to the friendly bar of the hotel, where we revived our drooping spirits with liquids to which we were both more acclimatized. Quite a number of guests watched us with jealous eyes, and finally followed our example. At one period, during the long-winded utterances of a local Demosthenes, the array of empty chairs became almost pathetic.

Curiously, at this particular banquet, where no vine-leaves were twisted in the hair of the guests, smoking was not barred, and cigars and cigarettes were much in evidence. The banquet, however, as a banquet was a failure; although it may have been a triumph on the part of the ascetic Pussyfoots. It was too much like a performance of "Hamlet" without the Prince of Denmark, and the whole thing lingers in the memory of one of the guests as an awful example of how not to do such things.

MIMNERMUS.

GARFIELD'S OPINION OF GARFIELD.

I do not care much what others say and think of me. But there is one man's opinion which I very much value, and that is the opinion of James Garfield. Others I need not think about. I can get away from them, but I have to be with him all the time. He is with me when I rise up and when I lie down; when I eat and talk; when I go out and come in. It makes a great difference whether he thinks well of me or not.—*President Garfield.*

The Christ Myth.

THE Rev. R. J. Campbell, in his life of Christ (Benn's sixpenny books), curtly dismisses the myth theory of the Christian Saviour by saying that no scholar of repute entertains the idea. He meets the myth advocate by the way, and dodges past on the other side; pretends that he is not worth stopping for, and shepherds his readers past the danger point. And no one is more adept at looking a difficulty in the face and then ignoring it than the theologian seeking to impart some solidity to the tenuous figure of the Lord. For there are really some scholars whose repute is beyond question, who maintain that the Christ of the New Testament is akin to Adonis and the rest of the saviour gods, whose origin is to be sought for in the myth-making period of primitive peoples; and there are many more, even within the Church, who have stripped the central figure of Christianity of many of his distinctive features, although, maybe, that is done by way of obstructing the advance of the myth protagonists. Mr. Campbell, however, is not one of those who throw out some non-essential thing to stay the oncoming wolves; he hangs on—with a deal of twisting of the old wax nose, and some delightful muddling on the ethical teaching of Christ—and probably trusts to some wave of unreason to put the pursuers out of action.

The case for the non-historicity of Jesus has been stated anew by Mr. J. M. Robertson, in *Jesus and Judas*. Much of the book is argued in a broad, general way, which adds to its interest for the ordinary reader, but it is mainly concerned with textual criticism. This textual criticism, when conducted by scholars of the calibre of Mr. Robertson, is quite a fascinating thing to follow, and mentally stimulating trying to understand. The study of Christ from the anthropological point of view is, of course, the more important, the decisive study, in fact, but when the orthodox exponents of Christianity are willing to base their belief in the historicity of Jesus on some stray texts that, to them, seems to be authentic, there is no option for the Rationalist but to follow the religionist on to his own ground and refute him there.

In view of the fact that at least one Rationalist of standing—and, of course, many Christians—has based part of his belief that Christianity must have started away from an actual living person, on the famous passage in *Josephus*, giving it a wider interpretation than usual, it is instructive to turn to the author of *Jesus and Judas* and see how he handles the problem. The interpretation in question, by Mr. Robert Arch, in the *Rationalist Annual*, is that there was deletion as well as interpolation in the "Josephus" forgery. In place of the section which speaks of "the Christ," Mr. Arch suggests that the historian gave an account of Jesus which included the virgin birth, and perhaps dwelt on the impiety of connecting the Most High with an affair with a woman. That would run naturally with what the historian records in the paragraph following the disputed passage, which tells how a Roman lady was tricked into an assignation with an admirer in a temple on a pretext of meeting the God. The deletion consists of getting rid of the hostile reference to Jesus; the interpolation being, of course, the famous forgery. That is a courageous attempt to smooth out the undoubted rupture in the Josephan text, but it seems a small thing to constitute "another sad calamity" to the Jews. And as Mr. Robertson points out, apart from everything else, the fact that Origen in his reply to Celsus never once quotes from the Josephan passage is proof that no reference to Jesus was there in his time, at the end of the second century. Origen ranks as one of the most cultured of

the early Christian writers, and quotes Josephus on other occasions. It is unlikely that he would not use the passage extolling "the Christ" had it been there. Mr. Robertson does consider the possibility of some wonder-worker about that time having the old Joshua-Jesus cult, which had an existence in Jewry, associated with him, and the subsequent manipulation of documents, due partly to the contending factions seeking to boost up their own particular doctrines, would perhaps account for the figure that stands in the New Testament as the Christ. But while that would give some justification for a Rationalist's belief in the historicity of the founder of Christianity it would not be acceptable to the Christian. Neither would the interpretation of the Josephus passage which Mr. Robertson quotes from a German writer to the effect that Jesus was the illegitimate offspring of a Roman soldier named Panthera, and an imposter.

There is another theory concerning Jesus and Christianity that has occasionally been mooted by scholars and others. A Professor Johnson, some twenty odd years ago, propounded the idea that the Benedictine monks concocted the whole story. That would be a difficult thing to sustain, but the idea of the New Testament being a deliberate invention to impose a tyrannical rule on the peoples of Europe and Africa is plausible enough, and quite a number of facts go to support it. There is little of honesty about the Gospels. They are full of interpolations and contradictions; a hotch-potch of pre-Christian writings, poetry, drama, fables and phallic lore. Their order and importance is disputed by theologians other than the lowest grade of preachers. An eminent Swiss theologian, in seeking to prove the historicity of Jesus, cites nine texts as being beyond criticism—"cannot have been invented." Nine only out of an inspired lot of thousands! There is no evidence of any value in contemporary writings, and archaeological investigation since has been equally barren. Hebrew, according to the higher critics in the Church itself was "unvocalized"—a manufactured article, and he whom the Rev. R. J. Campbell terms "the greatest being who has ever lived in this world" walked in the footsteps of the Indian Christna with such fidelity that copying seems the only explanation to meet the facts.

Suppose that a person named Jesus did live at the time in question. That alone would have little more significance than if he had been named Reuben or Isaac. But the moment you begin to distinguish him from other men you enter the region of myth, which puts him in the same category as other gods. The circumstances surrounding his birth have been paralleled in scores of cases. Christna was of royal origin, as he was, and both were cradled among lowing oxen. The Apocryphal gospel of Matthew records that Jesus was born in a cave—as the child of the Earth Mother and the Sun—Dionysus was mothered in the same way. Mithra was rock born. The flight into Egypt, or something similar, has been told of innumerable gods. "Isis flies to the swamps of the Delta to bear Horos. Latona wanders far to bear Opollo." And so the story goes on. The Descent into Hell is a commonplace in half a dozen pre-Christian cults, and the doctrines of Jesus were hoary with age long before the Christian era. For how long man has fashioned gods and ritual to symbolize his fears and hope no one can tell; "of myth there is no 'original,' save mankind's immemorial dream."

A faint echo of those far away days when gods were born was heard annually on the banks of the Tweed, up to half a century ago. When the Feast of Tweedmouth came round, some of the less reputable townsmen elected a Mayor, generally a half-witted and

droughty character. He was a privileged person. Hoisted into a cadger's cart by way of chariot, and accompanied by a host of courtiers, he made a tour of the fair ground and called at all the public houses, where a plentiful supply of beer was always forthcoming. An important part of the ceremony was the anointing of the Mayor by his attendants, who accomplished that by throwing the dregs of their beer over him. When the liquor showed signs of slackening and the Mayor was full up, he was trundled down the shore and tipped into the river. A resident parson now and again tilted at the custom and this, in many respects, joyous relic of the god-making days was done away with. The Mayor was not exactly an important personage, but he was of the blood royal; a sort of far removed cousin of Jesus Christ. He, like Jesus, for the time being, put on kingly state; he was anointed with the same object in view, and was sacrificed to appease the gods. Although he took a longer time for his resurrection he accomplished that also. And the likeness extended even further. What might be called man's sense of human dignity annihilated the Mayor, and that same human quality, which prompts man to stand alone and independent, is doing the same service for the Christ of Christianity.

H. B. DODDS.

Spiritualism amongst Pagan and Savage Races and as Revealed in the Bible.

(Continued from page 44.)

Now strange as it may sound to Christian ears, incomprehensible as it may be to the mentality of a Sunday school teacher, a deacon, or a Freemason, the idolators of paganism, likewise the witches of medievalism, did not look upon their chief as an evil spirit, but as a god.¹⁰ The votaries of this (according to Christian nomenclature) devil of the pagans and witches worshipped their deity as a God. The witchcraft of the Middle Ages merely took the place of the ancestor worship of paganism; as this had ousted the sun and serpent worship of barbarism. In its turn witchcraft has given way to what is known as modern spiritualism. D. D. Home, Eusapia Palladino, the Fox girls, would have been burned had they lived in the fourteenth century. It is supremely doubtful if J. M. Hickson would have escaped a similar fate. True enough, kings and saints have done the trick with equal thoroughness through the ages, but Hickson is neither the one nor the other. He is not even an ordained priest, and the pontiffs of those days had a habit of putting down with promptness and completeness any usurpation of their own God-granted authority. Evil spirits and devils were remarkably comprehensive terms.¹¹ They were apt

¹¹ Lord Coke's definition of a witch summed up the law on the subject: "A witch is a person who hath conference with the devil, to consult with him or to do some act; and any person proved to have had such conference was thus convicted of a capital offence and sentenced accordingly." This accounts for the fact, commented on by all students of the witch-cult, that a witch was often condemned even though she had invariably used her skill for good and not for evil; for healing the sick, not for casting sickness. If it were proved she had obtained her knowledge from the Devil she had broken the law and must die.—(*Witch Cult in Western Europe*, M. A. Murray.)

¹⁰ Fanatical religionists look upon the deities of every rival religion as devils. Thus the gods of witches and of the pagans, to the Christians, were devils. Similarly the Jews, who refused to admit the divine conception of Jesus, looked upon the risen Christ as a devil. Those who confessed to the possession of familiar spirits were accused of conferring with the devil—e.g., the demon of Socrates.

to be made serve as the authors of every solitary thing that was not understandable of the gifted hierarchy of the day, even Jesus himself being accused of practising witchcraft. (Mark iii. 22.) In consequence, dabblers in the occult were not given to advertising their powers: their clientele was select and secret: any relation of a witch's powers was to a special audience and in whispered accents.

That witchcraft, popular opinion to the contrary notwithstanding, was and is where still practised a definite religion, is a sure and certain thing. It was just as much a religion as Christianity, or Buddhism. It had its god, its spirits of the dead, its ritual, its sacrifices.¹² There are strong grounds for supposing it to be originally and fundamentally a phallic cult; that its observances were mixed up with a good deal of promiscuous fornication is enormously evident from the reports of witch trials. Its priests were libidinous to a degree, and that under the pretence of holy rites and fear instilled into peasant girls they satisfied depraved sensual desires to some considerable tune is more than suspicious. But a religion it was just the same, and its followers were, in their way and according to their lights, every bit as fanatical as is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or Dennis Bradley in the cause of spiritualism, and no more deluded than any kneeler in a Catholic confessional box.

This phallicism, the outcome of sun-worship, has at one time been a prominent feature of every religion, of primitive Christianity no less than of paganism. Its rites are still openly practised by savages the world over; they survive, though their true meaning may be largely lost, in the customs of civilized races. The rain makers of the American Indians, the flax-jiggers of Russia are conscious performers, the Maypole dancers of England unconscious performers, of homologous fertility rites. Min was a fertility god, so was Siva, so too Osiris, so Bacchus, so Priapus. To these gods human sacrifices were common enough, and precisely similar to those mentioned and condemned in the Bible. Thus:—

And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils. (Psa. cvi. 36-38.)

And thus:—

They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. (Deut. xxxii. 17. See also Deut. xiii.)

In the earlier days of the cult a priest, and on occasion an animal, in which the god was incarnate received the sacrifices. An echo of this practice was seen in the *jus primæ noctis* of kings and pontiffs of the middle ages, and in the "complex marriage" of the Oneida Community, a notorious antinomian religious sect of the last century.

As to the Christians, the crucifixion of Christ came to be recognized as a form of sacrifice, so to the wizards and witches themselves burning was a sacrificial cult. Hence Joan of Arc, witch supreme, was looked upon as God incarnate duly sacrificed,¹³ so too her compatriot Marshal Gilles de Rais. From the sacrifice of the incarnate God himself it is but a step to the substitution of surrogates. Thus the wine of

the Protestant Eucharist; the sacred wafer of the Catholics.

At this stage it seems advisable to recapitulate the position. If the Bible proves anything at all it proves with indubitable force the reality of spiritualism, or survival of the soul. The clergy may shake their heads and attempt to interpret the Scriptures in other ways, but there is no getting away from this bald truth. From Genesis to Revelations the existence and worship of the spirits of the dead are avowed and admitted. The Bible (especially the New Testament) is a constant and continual promise of a future spiritual life: in the reincarnation of Samuel, of Moses, of Elisha, of Christ himself, it provides striking evidence of survival. The Communion service used in every Christian church is a declaration of spiritualistic belief. Thus:—

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets. And I believe one Catholick and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come.

Futile, puerile and jejune is the division of the Bible by the local clergy, amateur theologians and moralists into the true, the fictitious, the doubtful. We are not dealing with a mass of evidence that can be sorted, checked, authenticated. We cannot rake up witnesses. We cannot even consult a detailed statement by an observer upon whose capability or capacity for critical observation we have a tittle of evidence. We are not even sure of the authorship of the only documents in existence, which documents have been edited, mauled, bowdlerized and interpolated by prejudiced and fanatical pontiffs. Clearly therefore no choice is possible. It is a case of swallow the whole thing as absolute truth or reject the lot as fable. There can be no picking out of bits to suit one's own ideas. This method is, I know, a popular one: it is the method adopted by theological orators such as Gipsy Smith, Billy Sunday and Woodbine Willie, by Sunday school superintendents, Methodist preachers, Y.M.C.A. lecturers, Rotary Club speakers, pious Freemasons and Oddfellows: in short, it is the method adopted by every religious enthusiast parading the mentality of a teacher, or a shop assistant or a cloth manufacturer.

To this eclecticism is due the unquestioned acceptance of the resurrection of Christ, the Sermon on the Mount, the Sacraments; and the utter rejection of the story of the Gadarine swine, the raising from the dead of Jauris' daughter, the speech of Balaam's ass, the spewing up of Jonah by the whale. Not many theologians to-day would express any belief in the demonology of the New Testament. Still fewer would subscribe to the reality of the witchcraft of a few centuries ago. Hardly a one could be found to accept as in any way evidential the spiritualistic evidence of to-day. And yet the grounds on which they single out certain things for acceptance or denial, be they collected, are such as would appeal to an infant in arms. There is not a jot more evidence in support of one than of the other. If there are sufficient grounds for disbelieving the demonology of the Bible and the story of creation, there are equal grounds for disbelieving the Resurrection and even the very existence of Christ. If the facts connected with the story of the rising of Jesus are sufficient to justify a belief in eternal life, then by every logical process of reasoning Sir Oliver Lodge in *Raymond* provides evidence in all abundance of survival. Homologously Dennis Bradley in *Towards the Stars*, and

¹² In *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*, M. A. Murray quotes, page 154, from Holmshead's *Ireland*: "The earliest witch-trial in the British Isles shows animal sacrifice. In 1324 in Ireland, Lady Alice Kyteler was charged to have nightly conference with a spirit called Robin Artisson, to whom she sacrificed in the highwaie ix. red cocks."

¹³ The ashes of Joan were collected and scattered on running water. This, like the sprinkling of water on sundried ground, is a fertility rite known to all primitive cultures.

Hammen Swaffer in *Northcliffe's Return*, betray a clarity and eventuality that there is no gainsaying. The argument so beloved of sophomoric parsons and professors that Elisha's conjuring tricks, Christ's miracles, and every other one of the thousand stories that stick in any sane man's gullet are not to be taken literally is not only stupidly paralogical, it is the kind of reasoning brandished in jugfuls by the village simpleton. If the reader is not to take the raising of Lazarus from the dead, or the transference of the evil spirits into a herd of swine as literally true, then by the same vapid reasoning the Resurrection, the Sermon on the Mount, in short, every other solitary incident in the Bible is not to be taken as literally true. Every incident is either true or not true. No other reading to anyone short of an absolute idiot is possible.

(To be concluded.)

GEORGE R. SCOTT.

Taming a Christian.

THIS might have been called "Telephonic Polemics." Two men at either end of a Block Section, an old and a young, a Christian and an Infidel; the older, and Freethinker, a stranger returned to the scenes of his boyhood and to a new generation of peculiar Christians, "Ply-mouthers," as an Ayrshire sage has called them, yet of various persuasions, some with a new religion, but all tainted with the old. Knowledge is nothing to them, belief is all; there is, as the illustrious Sir Walter once said, "But one Book"—what a stultifying of thought and spirit was even here!—but it served, with other fictions, to clothe in romantic atmosphere the obvious commonsense of life. The older man with many new duties to learn, with the slower "uptak'" of sixty years, with poignant memories of other times and places—

Where one man and his sorrows dwelt so long, sought to propitiate his younger mate in the next Box—the latter a querulous, curious, malicious, aggravating, perfect, sea-green incorruptible of the railway, and of religion—the reader will excuse the adjectives, all too inadequate for plenary delineation as applied to plenary inspiration; to one to whom the Bible was the "unerring, unchangeable, indestructible, Word of God," or other polysyllabic superlatives. You have seen, dear reader, who are probably a humane Freethinker, seen some old peaceable horse in a field galled at the heels by a yelping terrier. A touch of whose hoof could have destroyed the meddlesome creature. This seemed to be exactly the situation. At last religion was spoken of—it had been in action for weeks—by the youngster: why should the Freethinker complain of a hard world and some local discomforts?—"I'm share ye juist dee like a dog."—Oh, sancta simplicitas!—Whereupon followed the mild rebuke—mighty only to one whom God has given brains to understand it—a discourse on the scientific facts regarding the deaths of dogs and men. As the one dieth so dieth the other, verily they have all one breath . . . For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest—Did the Preacher here forget or forego his immortality?—or he could have been offered this from Job:—

No doubt but ye are the wise people,
And wisdom shall die with you!
But I have understanding as well as you;
I am not inferior to you:
I am as one mocked of his neighbour, saying of me,
He calleth upon God, but doth he answer him?
The just, upright man is laughed to scorn.
As a lamp whose flame is just going out,
So is a man sliding into poverty.

This is biblical, but might have been written by Walt Whitman, and is scientific also. But as for our young Christian, fair science frowned not on his humble birth, and lovely and divine philosophy has also passed him by. He is content in his sublime conceit to hail his puny Tiber as the Tay; his little stagnant ditch as the full river of wisdom. He was asked what kind of God

he believed in, was it anthropomorphic—the word duly explained to him—as implied in the text, "God made man in his own image?"—a manlike God—or was this an initial error in this "unerring" Book? It was humbly explained to him how the poor, old, despised Freethinker was "spiritual," also, touched with the purely secular injunction: "Build thou more noble mansions, oh, my soul!" And the little one was awed, no doubt thinking he was listening to a religious discourse, while the "Preacher" barely restrained explosions of laughter at thus shaking a few drops from the great ocean of Freethought over this narrow bigot, who had never even dreamed of a pond. He listened quietly, frightened or impressed, or thinking he had merely stirred up madness; *puir wee sowl!* and hung up his receiver with a weak "Guid nicht!" But he was at it again next day, on railway working, as in Stevenson's *Beggar Wife*: "Oh, a wad like to ken, to the beggar wife, said I?" "Whit wye? Hoo did ye? etc., speerin' the seat vot o' a pair o' auld breeks an' speerin' wha did it. Weel, he was told, "ye can keep ye're quastions tae the morn." Later he was counselled to "Go and take a sleep, you badly need it." Finally, he was told, twice, and simply, to — — —! He has not gone, but has since seemed more fit for this temperate zone.

Such episodes are comic and tragic. Mr. Foote once replied to such another thus: "You say you do not agree with us; but when did we undertake to agree with you? And fancy God damning us for differing with you—the comedy overwhelms the tragedy!" After all, our young Christian may not be tamed, but one must scatter the seed in the hope that some luckier grain may find fruitful lodgment in a sterile soil. One must not leave such people wholly to God.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Acid Drops.

Mrs. Ruth Browne Snyder, and Judd Gray, condemned to death for the murder of Mrs. Snyder's husband, were duly electrocuted at Sing-Sing prison, New York. And we know it will gratify all Christians to know that even though the murder was a cold-blooded and brutal one, both Mrs. Snyder and Gray never faltered in their Christian faith. This sustained them to the end. Mrs. Snyder had just finished repeating, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," when the current was switched on, and death ensued. She had previously confessed her guilt, Gray also met a pious end. He walked to the chair repeating the Beattitudes, and died with words of Scripture on his lips. They had combined to beat in the man's head with a window weight, and to strangle him with picture wire. But it is good to know that their faith in Jesus never wavered.

Freethinkers should note this case and reflect. Suppose that Mrs. Snyder and Judd Gray had both been Atheists. What would they have had to console them on the way to the chair? What kind of a message would they have had to send to the outside world? They would have had no future life to expect, no promised felicity to reward them as the price of repentance. Christianity is the one religion, that, more than any other, can enable the murderer to meet his end with calmness, trusting to the sacrifice of Jesus to pull him through. And the State may electrocute, strangle, decapitate or hang, but it never fails to recognize the supreme need of religion on these occasions, and to see to it that the murderer or murderess dies with all the official consolation that Christianity can bring them. The man who is murdered must take his chance.

The spirit of Mrs. Snyder has not been long in getting into contact with the Spiritualists, or the Spiritualists have not been long in getting into touch with Mrs. Snyder. Twenty-four hours after she had reached the "Summerland," she sent a message through a New York

medium, in which she said she was happier than she had ever been, and is quite sure God had forgiven her. We have no doubt that men and women in all parts of the world will heave a sigh of thankfulness at the news that Mrs. Snyder is well and happy and is all right with God. What should we do without these religious messages?

Viscount Halifax has a book of notes on the *Malines Conversations*, and the following extract may be cited as an example of that clarity conspicuous in all things connected with faith, and the thousand and one cobwebs to be spun from the word:—

That with regard to the position of the Holy See and the question of Papal supremacy, the Anglicans—although they disowned the monarchy of the Bishop of Rome, and maintained that his doctrinal authority is not separate from that of the Episcopate and can only be exercised in conformity with the traditions and teachings of the whole Church of Christ—conceded that a visible headship of the Church might be found to be essential for the accomplishment of a reunited Christendom.

That the bishops derived their succession direct from the Apostles.

In the meantime, the lower orders of those self-appointed guardians of mankind in the form of the "National Free Church Council," are definitely in opposition to Dog Racing. There is also, in our opinion, much good work to be done by this body in suppressing the illicit trade by children in cigarette cards. It has to come to our knowledge that these cards are freely bartered by boys and girls for aniseed balls and marbles, and this sort of thing leads to greed, avarice, and moral depravity.

The Industrial Christian Fellowship suggests that April 29 should be specially observed as "Industrial Sunday." The Archbishop of Canterbury has found time out of his strenuous days with Prayer Book Revision to give the movement his blessing. One appeal in its favour has been signed by Labour Members of Parliament, which is perhaps an excuse to be saved the trouble of thinking. As the Labour Party itself is the victim of an almost identical mesmerism by words in the same way that the followers of the Archbishop are, we do not expect Utopia to arrive by to-morrow's post. The jargon of religion, labourism and finance is a trinity of incantation obscuring real issues; we do not see how pious labour leaders can ever hope to grow up to ask and seriously demand an answer to the question by what right do a few individuals controlling money set workers and employers at each others throats? Perhaps the simplicity of this is too profound to those who can recite the Athanasian Creed or graduate from the P.S.A. pulpit.

Canon F. L. Donaldson has indicated in an American paper what he calls the only social sins. They are: (1) Policies without principles. (2) Wealth without work. (3) Pleasure without conscience. (4) Knowledge without character. (5) Commerce and industry without morality. (6) Science without humanity. (7) Worship without sacrifice. We don't quite see what the seventh item has to do with social affairs. Worship, with or without sacrifice, is a private affair. The first six "social sins" will be abandoned, not through men worshipping God or asking him what they should do, but through their using as guides their intelligence and reason in the light of experience.

The King of Afghanistan has been to see Papa at the Vatican, and—thrilling news—he neither knelt nor kissed Papa's hand. We are not told whether the King's objection to the kissing performance was a hygienic one, but we should like to think so.

The Lord has been "calling" the Rev. F. W. Norwood, of City Temple fame, to go to the pastorate of the American Church in Montreal (stipend, £2,000 yearly).

The "call"—or the stipend—was not persuasive enough. The reverend gent. has decided not to heed it, but to remain here—for the benefit of God, King and country.

The Rev. J. E. Rattenbury, in the *Methodist Times*, says that he has known the simple and sincere testimony of illiterate speakers in Hyde Park result in the conversion of two very highly educated Agnostics, with whom learned doctrinaires had entirely failed. Names, please. Surely the "very highly educated" ones are not ashamed to let the world know who they are. We always thought that religion was supposed to give the lucky possessor of it moral courage.

Is the Sunday school too educational? is the question asked by a writer in a religious weekly. He refers to the modern methods and policy adopted in Sunday schools, and not to the mental fodder provided. There's small chance of this being too educational; or even the least bit educational, using the term in the sense accepted by educationalists.

At the Chester Conference of the National Union of Women Teachers, the delegates enthusiastically welcomed the proposed extension of votes to women at twenty-one years of age. A timely reminder here is, that the chief opposition to the extension is based on the Christian notion, originating in the Christian Bible, that women are men's spiritual inferiors, and the source of all his trouble.

Somebody unknown recently dropped £100 into the Westminster Hospital box. Here's a chance for some popular paper to make the usual fatuous remark: "This is the kind of true Christianity we like to see." The demi-semi-Christianized reader loves this sort of rubbish.

Singing an old sea chanty, there died the other day Capt. Sir Frederic Young, who during his career had salvaged 500 ships and their cargoes. It ought to have been, not a sea chanty, but a hymn. Then thousands of preachers—professional and lay—would have snapped at the incident as a useful peg to hang a sermon on, for the delectation of the brethren.

Dr. J. A. Hutton: "When your conscience is right, your manners are ever so much better." Indeed? From our knowledge of Christian history we prefer to say: The more convinced is the Christian that his conscience is right, the worse are his manners.

What has 2,000 years of Christianity done? It has brought public opinion down on the side of right, says the Dean of Westminster. Of course—the cart always pulls the horse on the Christian road of progress.

According to the will recently proved of the Rev. George Parker, the well-known United Methodist minister, the good man hoarded up the treasures of earth to the extent of £11,740. Christians who believe that Holy Writ really means what it says, will know that the Rev. George is now experiencing the inconvenience of a sultry and sulphury climate.

Sketching the Virgin Mary's character, the Rev. G. E. Darlaston praised Mary's unconscious and true humility which, when the secret of Christ's birth was made known to her, enabled her to accept the fact that she was to be mother of the Messiah without any false humility or mock modesty. What the rev. gent. more usefully might have eulogized was Mary's possession of a practical philosophy—she made the best of a bad job. This would have given him a really useful peg on which to hang a ton of "uplifting" slop.

Canon A. Silva-White (of Sunderland) says:—

It is time the Church went out of trading, bartering and selling. The indirect methods largely in vogue in financing Church work (e.g., holding church bazaars, fetes, etc.) tend to materialism, and this is bound to have its effect on other parochial activities, such as choirs, guilds, and societies, which will not give service unless a bait is held out to them, and they can perceive "a good time for themselves."

In regard to the latter portion of the Canon's statement, we gather that he objects to Church workers expecting payment for services rendered. The Canon, of course, works for his Church strictly for love.

According to the *Evening Standard*, the Bishops intend to present the Deposited Prayer Book to the House of Commons again, and to present it "practically intact, and certainly without vital changes." A pious weekly suggests that this will be bad tactics; Parliament will regard it as an affront. Our friend thinks there is now an opportunity for the Bishops to make the Church truly Protestant, and "to prove that it has the right to act as the spiritual guide of the nation." Judging by the fact that the large majority of the nation rejects the Church of England as a guide of any kind whatever, we should say that the Church need not trouble about proving it has a right to act as a guide. Proofs of that kind have gone out of fashion.

"Candidus" of the *Daily Sketch* says:—

In all art, truth, whether it be ideal or real, is the divinity that we should worship. And those who, like Thomas Hardy, hold up truth to our eyes even though it seems cruel, must be counted among the benefactors of mankind.

"Candidus" might have done a good service to the benefactors of mankind if he had mentioned that pious Christians banned from the public libraries the free thinking books of Hardy as being too Freethinking. That would have enabled him to add the moral—that the pious boycotters did not worship at the shrine of the divinity which he now says the reader should worship; their belief in Christian "truth" stood in the way.

At the unveiling of a war memorial in Brittany, the local Teachers' Union informed the Prefect that it would take no part in the proceedings unless everything of a "patriotic" nature was rigidly excluded. The Union insisted that the inscription "Died for their country," should be altered to "Victims of the Great War." The Prefect, says *Die Menschheit*, was unable to withstand their requests.

English war memorial inscriptions often lead off with "To the glory of God." English parsons by the thousand say God gave the Allies the victory. On the assumption that God who can give a victory can as easily prevent a war or stop one when started, we suggest that the inscription for war memorials everywhere should read: "*Victims of God's Largest War.*"

According to the *Publishers' Circular*, a greater number of books was produced in 1927 than in any other year in the history of British publishing. We are not sure there is any particular gain here. The majority of the vast print-devouring public of to-day have never been taught how to read, but merely to follow print. Their schooling has left them ignorant of the fact that real reading is analytical, critical, reflective. Our educationalists produce multitudes of idea memorizers, but few thinking readers.

We all made resolutions at the beginning of the New Year, said the Dean of Bangor, but who made a resolution to think more? We understand, on unreliable authority, that many of the Dean's hearers enquired whether the revised Prayer Book laid down any rules relative to thinking more. If so, they were against it.

Viscount Ullswater says that his grandfather sat in the House of Commons for thirty years and never made a speech. The grandfather evidently belonged to the popular novelists' favourite race of "strong, silent men." If only the Bishops in the House of Lords had been of the same breed, perhaps the passing of Reform measures for the benefit of the workers might not so often have been hindered.

We have received a list of lectures which are ready to be delivered by a London parson. He leads off with 101 lectures on the life and times of Adam and Eve. Now if this man can give 101 lectures on the world when it was only a few days old, there seems nothing to stop him giving a thousand before there was anything to talk about. We note the information that the preacher's services can generally be secured. That seems only another way of saying that generally they are not required. But a hundred and one lectures on our first parents! How many would he give on the entire family?

The Bishop of Southwark would like to see the name of each owner of slum property put up on the door outside, so that all men could read it. We are not so sure that this arrangement would suit the Bishop's Church. It might get much free publicity of a kind it might not relish. We fancy that neither the Ecclesiastical Commissioners nor many wealthy supporters of the Church would be pleased if the Bishop's suggestion was adopted.

From the *Times Literary Supplement* the 30,000 readers will be able to read, in a review of Dr. Krohn's work, *In Borneo Jungles*, that the Borneo pagan is not an uncouth and bloodthirsty savage, but, as he really is, a simple and likeable person who is still unspoilt. The prayers of all Freethinkers will be offered up in the hope that the missionary will leave this likeable person alone.

The Rev. A. W. Harrison (a Methodist) has been reading the files of old newspapers. One excerpt from an article by him is:—

Perhaps the most interesting extract from our point of view is an account of the debate in the House of Lords in May, 1775, on the Manchester Playhouse Bill. The Bishop of London opposed the Bill on the ground that a playhouse would injure the trade of a manufacturing town like Manchester, by making the merchants less industrious. The Earl of Carlisle took the opposite view: "As to the objection from Manchester being a manufacturing town, I must differ entirely with the reverend prelate. Our manufacturing towns have of late been the particular receptacles of Methodism; I know not of any way so effectual to eradicate that dark, odious and ridiculous enthusiasm as by giving to the people cheerful rational amusements which may operate against their Methodistical melancholy."

The Bishop's attitude towards amusements for the people was one common to men of his cloth at that time. We hope working men will appreciate that for the cheerful rational amusements "they enjoy to-day, they are not indebted to the men of God. The noble Earl had evidently absorbed his Church's teaching of goodwill to all men—provided they didn't belong to another Christian sect.

The clergy of Lytham, Lancs., recently had a "Back to worship Sunday." Of course the trouble was that the people had already adopted a "Turn the back to worship on Sunday" attitude. Hence the move. It is something like the shopping week instituted by certain towns in the hopes of stimulating trade.

For the first time in their history, the Glasgow trams are to carry advertisements. But religious texts and advertisements of beer and whisky are prohibited. We rather like the conjunction of the two in this ban.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that a renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—H. Good, 10s.; The Flea, 2s. 6d.; M. Mager, 2s.; J. Lazarneck, 10s. 6d.; J. Wearing, 6d.

H. GOOD.—We hope your wishes for the future of the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust will be realized.

W. COOPER.—We do not know when the confirmation service was first instituted among the Jews, but we should say that it had always existed for the reason that it is an initiation ceremony, and these exist among savages in all parts of the world. If you refer to Stanley Hall's *Adolescence*, you will find a very lengthy list beginning with primitive peoples and coming right up to modern times.

H. ELMSLEY.—Glad you are so pleased with the second series of *Essays in Freethinking*. Another volume will follow in due course.

H. C. WALTER.—There is a good deal in your suggestion that any pamphlet or book criticizing should give exact reference for each verse quoted. Christians know so little of the Book they swear by that it is nothing new to find them denying the existence of texts which they find to be unpleasant and unwelcome when cited by a Freethinker.

D. R. LAMB.—Thanks. Shall appear as early as possible, but it is not easy to find room for continued articles.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen's audience at Liverpool, on Sunday last, was not quite so large as usual, which may have been owing to there being quite a number of other important meetings being carried on. But the lecture was well received, and appeared to be enjoyed by all. And there was no mistaking the note of sympathy among the audience.

The Secular Society, Limited, has just issued an eight-page tract, *The Poor Parson*, written by Mr. Cohen. The tract is issued in a very convenient pocket size, and is to be distributed at the nominal price of 2s. per hundred. We would like to see a large number of our readers indulge in a few hundred of these tracts for distribution. They can be sent through the post, left in trains or street cars, and otherwise placed to advantage. It is not a bad plan to enclose something of this kind in letters to suitable correspondents. One can never tell what may result from a little quiet propaganda. Anyway, five or ten shillings spent in this way is money well spent.

We again remind those of our readers who are members of headquarters that all subscriptions to the National Secular Society fall due on January 1. The Secretary informs us that subscriptions are coming in well, but all are not yet to hand. These should make their appearance before the month is up. And it is the month when many new members should be made. This is a hint to those readers of the *Freethinker* who are not

yet members of the Society. Full particulars may be had from the Secretary on application.

In noting the legacy of £500 received from the estate of the late Mr. H. Tucker, we mentioned another will, about which information would soon be forthcoming. This is the will of Mr. R. L. Martland, of Garstang, Lancs. By his will, Mr. Martland bequeaths to Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner the sum of £500, to Mr. Chapman Cohen £200, to Mrs. G. W. Foote £200, to Miss E. M. Vance £100, to Mr. J. T. Lloyd £100, and to Mr. C. A. Watts £100. The residue of his estate is to be divided between the National Secular Society and the Rationalist Press Association. Each of the Societies will benefit to the extent of about £3,000, probably a little over that figure.

Mr. J. A. Fallows has issued through the Pioneer Press *Critical Aphorisms* (1s., by post 1s. 1d.). The book is well printed and neatly bound. The book is a companion volume to the same author's *Realistic Aphorisms and Purple Patches*. There is not a page in the book in which a reader will not find something to arrest his attention and provoke thought. Only a limited edition has been issued, and we hope the work will have a ready sale.

We notice that the *Harrogate Herald*, which usually knows a good thing when it sees it, reprints a number of Mr. Fallows' aphorisms in its issue for January 11.

A new Branch of the N.S.S. has been opened at Fulham. The Secretary is Mr. Mathie, 32 Micklethwaite Road, Fulham, S.W.6. We hope that Freethinkers living in this part of London will see their way to joining the new Branch, and so help to make it a success. Mr. Cohen will be lecturing in the Fulham Town Hall, towards the end of March.

From an American paper we see that by the will of Mr. A. S. Capes, the American Society for the Advancement of Atheism has inherited 50,000 dollars, which is to be paid at the rate of 2,000 dollars annually.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Rosetti had two very successful meetings at Manchester on Sunday. The audiences were good, both in the afternoon and evening, and the newcomers who were present seemed to be very well pleased with the first Freethought lectures they had ever heard. There were many questions, and the happy look on the Librarian's countenance was eloquent of the amount of literature sold. The Manchester Branch is obviously putting the right people in the right places, and there is every sign that the Branch is to be increasingly successful in the future.

The West Ham Branch will hold a Fancy Dress Social on Saturday, February 4, in the Earlham Hall, Forest Gate. The Social will commence at 7 p.m., and there will be the usual excellent programme of music, singing, games and dancing. All Freethinkers are welcome, and it is hoped that as many as possible will come in Fancy Dress. There will be prizes for the best costumes. Those who have enjoyed themselves at previous socials held by the West Ham Branch will certainly make a special effort to be present on February 4, while those who may be attending for the first time can be promised a most enjoyable evening.

The Manchester Branch is to hold a Social Evening, Whist Drive and Dance, on January 21, at the Milton Hall, Broad Street, Pendleton. Freethinkers in Manchester and district should make every effort to be present. The company will be of the best, and all are sure to spend their time enjoyably.

Owing to want of space we are compelled to hold over a letter from Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook, on the Endowment Trust, and several letters from other correspondents. These will appear next week.

Sex "Morality" of Roman Catholicism.

ROMAN CATHOLIC priests are rather prone to make assertions, from pulpit and platform, and in books, about the purity and chastity of Catholic women.

Any Englishman who made the faithfulness and purity of English women matter for public mention and discussion would be considered an insufferable bounder. The Anglo-Saxon has an ingrained racial reticence or modesty about that subject (and sexuality in general) that seems to be almost a peculiarity of the race. There are quite well-meaning people amongst us who think our reticence is carried too far, and they advocate a more open, though of course serious and sober, dealing with the subject. But I am of opinion that the racial instinct to be shy of the subject and to shun it as much as possible is truer wisdom.

The instinct of our people is to make the subject taboo, and this very fact makes any breach of the instinctive convention so grave an offence that the taboo acts as a more powerful deterrent than anything that can be found under any other system. A loose tongue suggests loose morals. We don't like loose tongues.

We have an instinctive opinion that our racial morality as regards sex matters is the highest in the world. We take the virtue and chastity of our women so much for granted that we not only never think of bragging about it, but consider it a kind of sacrilege to talk about it at all.

The ordinary Englishman does not of course care two pins what a Catholic priest says, for said priest is in any case a rank outsider. And when a priest starts prating about the virtue of Roman Catholic women, he only makes himself more of an outsider than ever. The Englishman puts him down as a rotter, an unmarried bounder—and thinks no more about it.

(Just a little digression. I believe the reason why Englishmen are disliked and hated by many outsiders is because of that thick-headed complacency of theirs, which does not allow them to be even annoyed, much less insulted, by the vapourings of these outsiders. Annoyance is an admission that the annoyer is important enough to be taken notice of. Lack of annoyance is a demonstration of the utter lack of importance of the annoyer.

Not that the Englishman poses as a superior being—that also would be conceding to the other parties the status of being important enough to be posed to. It has never struck the English that these others are so important as that. The attitude of *not* posing is quite unconscious and thereby all the more aggravating. These others feel that anything they say has no more attention given to it than the chattering of excited magpies—and what makes it worse, these foreigners *can't understand it*. Studied, insolent contempt would be something within the range of their intellectual capabilities. But the unconscious, easy-going, tolerant contempt of the Englishman, as an exasperation to these foreigners is only excelled by the Englishman's thick-headed, mild and genuine surprise at the speechless spluttering anger to which they are reduced by their inability to ruffle him.—You remember the case of the English Tommy, with a nearly-epileptic Dago spluttering at him—Tommy not really comprehending, and actually with a kind of sympathy at something—he scarcely knew what—and with the racial horror of great emotion and the racial habit of getting round such an emotion with a joke, saying "An' 'ow does the chorus go me pore feller?"—Like Tommy, like officers—right up to

Field Marshals—right through the nation—is this rhinoceros-like imperviousness to "dagos" of all kinds. It carries us over and through all obstacles—up to a point. Beyond that it has its dangers. *Hence my book.*)

To get back to our mutttons, *i.e.*, the Roman Catholics and their habit of protesting how moral they are in matters of sex. Methinks they do protest too much. It gives one the idea that they feel it necessary to say it a lot of times. It is certainly a tribute (even if unconscious) to the high regard in which we hold sex-morality, and to the high standard we set on it. They know we do genuinely think very highly about it and do genuinely reach a high level, and they do so want us to believe that under their system the same thing prevails. They know it isn't so, but, oh, if only we would think so!

Even their own dupes can see that the Roman Catholic standard of achievement is below ours. There is probably far more suppressed scandal in Roman Catholic circles than the rest of the world knows about—and said rest knows a lot too!

The fact is that Roman Catholic priests have a sex obsession. Their own celibacy was, as an institution, founded by sexual perverts and in the case of every individual celibate, his unnatural state, is taken revenge on by nature herself, and he spends more of his time thinking about sex than do men who lead normal lives. "A priest will rush into print in a popular family journal on subjects that the average civilized man only discusses in works that the general public has not ready access to . . . he shrieks to the skies about matters that decent people do not speak of."

In this we see also the evil effects of the confessional. That institution, as we have before observed, has a tremendous bias towards sexualism. The priests force confessions to have a strong sexual flavour—partly to titillate their own libidinous tendencies, partly because of various advantages therefrom. They have, for instance, found that a great many women like to have sexual talk with a man, and so the confessional aids in attracting and keeping women in subjection to them. Then there is the financial side of the matter. "Absolution" is generally accompanied by "penance," and penance, being translated, often means "alms to Holy Church," *i.e.*, money (easy) for the priests. Sexual "sinning" being easy and pleasant, obviously offers great financial scope for its exploitation. Sexual talk in the confessional, far from allaying desire, rather warms it up. The priest has a direct financial incentive to encourage sexual irregularities—the more "sins" are committed the more are his chances of imposing profitable "penances."

Again, it is the deliberate policy of the priests to make their dupes breed like rabbits. The more dupes, the more power and money for the priests. If young people do not marry voluntarily, it pays the priest to use the confessional for producing "forced" marriages.

From very early years (long before puberty) the maidenly reserve and modesty which Catholic girls may be supposed to possess, are broken down. "In the Confessional a priest may put to a girl (or to a married woman) questions of the most intimate, of the most filthy, and of the most abominable kind." (How Catholic "men" can allow their wives and daughters to be subjected to such treatment is something that Englishmen can hardly understand; but there it is.) But what about modesty? Can it be claimed by any stretch of impudence, that these girls and women are modest?—it cannot, at any rate, not by English standards. Let Catholic women under-

stand quite plainly that their visits to the confessional do, by English standards, smirch their modesty and purity of mind.

The confessional causes the priests' chattels to be precociously sexual, and the courtship period starts early. Again, judged by English standards, we find a queer state of affairs. From the first approach of boy and girl the matter is reported by both (separately of course) to the priest. Each knows about it. Each knows that a third party has been taken into intimate confidence. Each knows that both have been cross-questioned very closely. Obviously there cannot be a prolonged "shy" stage in Catholic courtships. Obviously there must be a quick attainment of familiarity—and the priest, with an early marriage in view, does not hinder. The stage from familiarity to indulgence is made easy by the fact that any "sin" can be taken to the confessional and wiped out. The girl also knows she can take risks, because if it should come to pass that she "must" be married, she has the priest behind her, to see that the man (or boy) does not run away. Then when the marriage is a fact, the doctrine of the immorality of contraception gives what the chemist calls a "a high yield" of Catholic candidates for maternity benefits, free meals, free education, doles, poor law relief, old age pensions, etc. Why talk about "improvident" marriages when the simple English will provide for most of the expenses?

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

(To be continued.)

Parsons and Religion : Crime and Religion in America.

QUEER things are seen and heard in this fascinating country. Anybody who is anxious merely to be amused, interested and entertained without caring about causes and effects, will find in U.S.A. perpetual joy. It is only those who think, analyse the present and worry about the future who are shocked, dismayed, disgusted and alarmed by the many signs of "something being wrong."

George Remus is a self-confessed killer of his wife. The details show that this man as probably insane, and that is what he claims to be as a defence in his trial. When asked a question by the prosecutor in court, he replied, "Man, if I had you in the corridor I would wreck you physically."

Accordingly Mr. Remus, remanded in custody, was invited to preach in the Prison Chapel last Sunday. His sermon is fully reported in the Chicago newspapers. After the usual bosh about the heaven awaiting all true believers whatever their crimes, if only they repent at the last, he spent the remainder of his forty minutes in the pulpit in fulsome flattery of Rev. Carlisle (the jail chaplain) and the other officials who have charge of him:—

To you, Mr. Carlisle, I extend the appreciation of a man who recognizes as God that which is God. Personally, boys, I mean it, I would rather listen to his kind of true, basic and philosophical sermons than to sit in America's finest church and listen to some sermons that I have heard.

I have been a prisoner in twelve different jails in the United States and not a single one of them has come as near in fulfilling the standards as set up for reformation as has this. Your institution is as free from petty graft and thievery and institutionist "politics" as is the east from the west.

I want to add that a more considerate group of sub-officials that maintain and guard this jail cannot be found anywhere.

The American Prison Association's 57th Annual Congress at Tacoma, Wash., was a gathering of reformers of all schools of penology. Unfortunately the press re-

ports are very meagre. The enormous bulk of the American newspapers seems to find room for everything—except the important. The most insignificant crime is given more space than the most significant philosophy. These prison congresses generally help humane progress, and I have no reason to suppose that this unreported Congress was any exception to the rule. Besides some famous scientists, authors and teachers, there were present many chief warders, doctors, chaplains, prison visitors, magistrates and others.

The only bit of news that leaks out is that the chaplains nearly wrecked the Congress by insisting that its proceedings should open with prayer! It is satisfactory to learn that a large majority opposed this, and only the chaplains voted in its favour.

Readers of the *Freethinker* will remember that I drew their attention to the peculiar decision of the C.O.P.E.C. (religious organization) in connexion with the English Prison Conference. The C.O.P.E.C. arranged that at all such congresses their members should hold private meetings to force religious interests on these assemblies.

One of the chaplains has, since the Conference at Tacoma, exposed a similar point of view amongst American parsons. The clergy are not contented to offer their own contribution to the welfare of the prisons and to join in the general discussions. They insist that their own creed must be wedged in. This chaplain says in a letter to the press:—

I was greatly impressed with the small, very small, recognition given religion as one of the redeeming or reconstructive agencies in life. Psychology, physiology, sociology were all presented to the general sessions with every emphasis—but religion didn't get a look in . . . Many chaplains were there and had their separate meetings but they had no chance to tell the general audience what part religion has played and can play in the social as well as the spiritual redemption of us all . . . Good buildings, good oversight, good food, good surroundings, good work, good exercise. Yes, the Congress had them all, but they forgot religion, the foundation, the spring, the impulse, the generator of all good things.

What does this mean? Quite obviously and frankly it shows that these Chaplains are not interested in reform at all. They believe there is nothing like leather, that's all.

Those "separate meetings" are the very devil. I have attended many Conferences, and their chief merit is that they are "open," and that one can learn and even be converted to a new point of view. For an organized gang, whether of parsons or others, to come in and jaw in fulfilment of a privately arranged programme, deprives a Conference of spontaneity, reasonable consideration of evidence, and finally, of all usefulness. But—perhaps this is what those chaplains desired.

A Theosophical Society at Washington has instituted one admirable project. To alleviate the lot of friendless prisoners it has obtained official permission to find a correspondent who will exchange letters with one friendless prisoner. "The O.E. Library Critic" undertakes to find a correspondent for each willing prisoner. There is to be no charge, no attempt at begging on the one side, or propaganda on the other. There seems to be an elasticity about American jail official rules which is lacking in England. It is to be doubted whether the Home Secretary would permit the N.S.S. or the *Freethinker* to organize such a plan in England.

Incredible as it may appear to distant readers, law and justice have at least temporarily abdicated in Alabama and some other Southern States where the K.K.K. claims that its religious vows should override citizenship. Thirty-one cases of masked men prosecuted for kidnapping and flogging men, women, girls and boys, have been abandoned by the terrorized police. I have already shown that the K.K.K. is a body of fanatical protestant religionists. It is into their hands that the State police have surrendered law and order. There is a very active well-organized Anti-Saloon League, which exists for the enforcement of the Volstead Act. Is it really necessary to call into existence an anti-Flogging League to put a stop to these outrages?

"The Open Forum" calls attention to the blight of superstition and decadence which has steeped "the Solid

South." It heads a series of its informing articles "Where Religion Rules and Men Decay." The author says:—

Hog-tied by ignorance, from almost every home can be gotten religion, moonshine liquor or a fight. Grown white men permit the lives of young children to be ground to death in factories and mills. Lynching niggers is held to be the essence of civic duty. Physical beating-up of political opponents is an act of grace. In all the world it is doubtful if there is concentrated in one section so much patriotism, pride, religious bigotry, intellectual besottedness, sheer laziness and indifference to social wrong and human progress. The people appear too preoccupied with religious matters and the procreation of children to clean up and get in line with twentieth century progress. Should anyone inadvertently introduce a new idea, immediately the cross of Christ is raised and the indiscreet adventurer is driven out.

Robert G. Ingersoll is quoted as saying that "most of the country south of the Mason and Dixon line, and east of the Mississippi, was not adapted to the growth of human beings, but was best fitted for raising fish."

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Simplicities.

It is not daylight clear what your contributor wants, when he states, "Perhaps some reader or writer will offer his counsel," but Mr. Andrew Millar, who is a mental peak-dweller, has evidently struck a rock somewhere in the uncharted sea of thought. I stumbled against a copy of Thomson's *Leopardi*, and it was a companion for a week's careful reading, and, with the others, it was thrown into my tool-bag. As I do not want continually to be using a rip-saw, Leopardi will fulfil his function when and as required. He told me many things I did not know, and many things I already knew—I will fit him in my philosophy—but he shall not be the keystone; he was a "no-sayer" to life, and that is the language of dead men. Again, there are thoughts in him for which strangling would be too good; example: "In fine, it is true, though it seems incredible, that the more one knows of the world the more tolerant one becomes of it; which, however, signifies only that one realizes more and more its essential vileness." Would one not also give this melancholy yawp the order of the boot, by proof of it being untrue, and an insult to all the brave spirits of our own species that have gone before? "Men are miserable by necessity, and determined to believe themselves miserable by accident." This trend of thought is devitalizing, and almost anyone with a pen and some ink can write it by the yard. It is on no higher level than the zero of Christians—"original sin" and I will not have it at a gift. Nietzsche said the thing much better and passed on. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, under "Old and New Tables," he writes, "The world resembleth man, in that it hath a backside—so much is true. There is in the world much filth; so much is true! But the world itself is not therefore a filthy monster."

This world, in spite of Leopardi, is the best one we know, and I have every sympathy for all those who are seeking something positive, something that has the anvil ring of common sense. Leopardi only catches the ring occasionally, which is probably explained by his years of religious study. He suffered, and we are continually reminded of it, but no one asked him to write and give his complaint to readers. In fact, there is scarcely any reason for anyone writing a catalogue of all that is wrong in the world, and, without exaggeration, I would go so far as to say there is more mental health in *Materialism Re-stated* than the whole of Leopardi's work. Dump him, Andrew, and get your teeth in *Zarathustra*, so that in time you may dump him also, and pull Nietzsche by the beard—and he will thank you for it. Here is a thumb-nail sketch of Leopardi by the old rascal Nietzsche: "Such persons sit down to the table and bring nothing with them, not even good hunger: and then they do rail; 'All is vain.'" And, with ever an eye on the goal he writes: "Unto your children shall ye *make amends* for being the children of your fathers: all the past shall ye *thus re-*

deem." That will keep us from twiddling our thumbs, and mistaking the laughter of London crowds over the wireless as little more than the crackling of sticks under the pot. That will keep us from the job of being responsible for having to eat animals or taking the harbour bar moaning of Leopardi too seriously.

Perhaps these few attempts to extract Mr. Millar's thorn will locate it; I fear however, that when he wrote his article he had overlooked the trite commonplace of his beloved wet-blanket: Thought xxvii.—simply an old worn tune on the hurdy-gurdy: "Nothing indicates more clearly that one has little wisdom and little philosophy than to desire that everything in life shall be wise and philosophical." Hardly worth repeating—it is the wisdom gained by sucking one's own thumb, or sensed immediately as soon as one has taken hold of the first Persian virtue—"To tell the truth and to aim straight."

There is the glow of health over *In Praise of Birds*, and a psychologist might make an interesting diagnosis of Leopardi at that point; but even in this essay Leopardi wants to be something different from what he is—a man. He is envious of birds; and although his physical condition may have justified the thought, what is to be gained by throwing this thought to the world under egg-shell philosophy? How are we helped by it? As I write I can see a pair of blue tits gobbling fat bacon in the garden, and sparrows eating bread; the poor little devils are on the dole—of human thoughtfulness, and I hope that none of them will go hungry.

No, Leopardi wears thin, and is a drag on one's pilgrimage; he is as out of date as the Christian conception of the Freethinker as one who worries about the earth saying, "There ain't no Gawd." That conception is also held by Theosophists, and all the mystics and mystery-mongers looking out for rich old ladies; it is also held by weekday and Sunday journalists; it is also held by bawdy and respectable novel writers, whose bilge is not worth shelf room. At the same time, there is, in considering Leopardi, the provisional sympathy for him in the matter of time and place, but I do not care for all my music in the minor key. I want someone to help me to live, to square up to life, to understand its contradictions, its good, its evil; railing at life, expecting the world to sit up on its hind legs to meet with my approval, expecting justice to be the rule and not the exception, expecting a jolly meeting with Job's comforters, I have no time for such folly. Leopardi has one and a half inches of shelf room—he had better look out—William Harvey, Herodotus and J. A. Symonds have walked into the room this Christmas—but there is just one thought that might ensure the opposite of Merry Andrew keeping his place between *The Dream of John Ball* and *Lavengro*—"the world, wisely enough, prefers rather to laugh than to weep." I recite your re-prise Leopardi, and in ten volumes will discuss (but not in the *Freethinker*) the kind of laughter, the time for laughter, where laughter should be used, at whom laughter should be directed, laughter in the dentist's chair, etc., etc., with as much thoroughness as Master Rabelais, so that the listener shall say "Where's my hat?"

WILLIAM REPTON.

THE SUPERNATURAL IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

Most people beyond the pale of European civilization believe the world around them to be peopled by invisible spirits who are working for or against their welfare. These faiths give expression to the direct influence of supernatural ideas. But the indirect effects of such beliefs in the past are expressed in the form and texture of the civilization to which we are all subject to-day. Practically all the institutions and conventions to which our lives have to conform, even many of the most prosaic and apparently utilitarian practices, are the results of beliefs involving the idea of the supernatural.

Out of the supernatural beliefs of the astrologer and the alchemist the sciences of astronomy and chemistry developed . . .

The crafts of the carpenter and the stone-mason were originally elaborated to protect the bodies of the dead, under the belief, which we now know to be devoid of

any reasonable justification, that such measures for the safeguarding of the corpse could prolong the man's existence. The same train of supernatural ideas found expression in the invention of the arts of embalming, the making of portrait statues and architecture. The preservation of the body, the making of a life-like image of it, and the erection of buildings to protect it and afford facilities for the ceremonies of animating and nourishing the dead, were the motives that inspired these varied arts. Even an incentive to build sea-going ships and to embark on maritime adventure was provided by the need for resins, incense and timber for these purposes—the striving after the elusive hope of immortality, which more than fifty centuries ago the Egyptians imagined they would attain through making the corpse incorruptible and by supernatural means reanimating it.

From the ritual performances that were supposed to effect these supernatural results there developed the drama, dancing, music, and most of the games that form so large a part of the interests of modern peoples—and in particular those forms of sport that many people are apt to regard as British inventions of the last century! The games are not to be explained merely as the natural and obvious ways of expressing our innate skill and rivalry, nor are music and dancing wholly spontaneous expressions of the emotions of joy or sorrow. They are respectively the modified survivals of ritual combats and life-giving ceremonies inspired by supernatural motives . . .

But supernatural ideas were responsible for the invention not only of the tug-of-war, but also of most games of skill, such as football and cricket, tennis and polo. The intimate association of ball games with churches and with religious festivals persisted until modern times in Europe. But if we trace their history farther back, we shall find them in the form of ritual contests between royal combatants, in which kingdoms were at stake or, earlier still, the attainment of immortality was the prize, for the winner became a king and therefore a god.

But the idea of the supernatural was the underlying motive not only in building up the material and the sporting aspects of civilization, but virtually every aspect of culture.

Social and political organization, clothing and ornament, furniture and jewelry, organized warfare, the invention of currency and the sciences of astronomy and chemistry are among the ingredients of civilization that can be attributed to the inspiration of the supernatural.

G. ELLIOTT SMITH, Litt.D., D.Sc., F.R.S.

Another Discovery in Excavations at Jerusalem.

Inscription on an old wooden tray.

YOUNG Jesus made this wooden tray,
Whereon to mix the plastic clay,
From which he fashioned cocks and hens:
The singing larks, and warbling wrens,
And having modelled them in clay,
The cocks would crow, the hens would lay;
And all the lesser birds would sing:
Behold our maker, lord and king!
Then, kneeling on the wooden tray,
Would preen their wings and fly away.

S. PULMAN.

DEPARTED FRIENDS.

And, my friend, these men live on in us. They have the eternal in them. I do not look upon death as a victory over us—death and life are neighbours, each the cause of the other, and the task for us under stress of deprivation is to take our loved ones into the mind and commune with them, spirit to spirit.

"Letters of George Meredith."

Correspondence.

SHELLEY'S ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In *The Word in the World*, being the Adult School Lesson Handbook for 1928, there is a Lesson on Poetry. The Bible Reading is Isaiah 35, and "To show the Divine Word expressed through the poetry of Shelley, is the Aim of the Lesson. After giving a few interesting events in the early life of the Poet, the writer of the Lesson says, "Oppression, cruelty, insincerity were hateful to him, and because he saw them practised by people who professed to be Christian, he denounced Christianity and gloried in calling himself an Atheist," and because of this, "He was dismissed from the University, and was cast off by his father as the black sheep of the family." His short life was marred by unhappy love affairs, by family quarrels, by lack of money sometimes, and by disappointment from the people he was most anxious to help. "His material life was as restless as his spiritual life." Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* is urged to be read "over and over again," for "no subject could be more apt to Shelley's own nature than this ode; a nature 'tameless, swift, and proud,' as he likens it to the wind." We are now told "His (Shelley's) so-called Atheism, which was merely the revolt against the narrow conception of Christianity of his own day, is contradicted over and over again by the evidence of his own poems. The true Shelley is revealed above all in the poem, 'Adonais,' which he wrote on the death of his friend and brother poet Keats." One stanza is given:—

"That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move," etc.

So we now know that Shelley's "so-called" Atheism, which was merely "the revolt" against the "narrow conception" of Christianity of "his own day," is contradicted "over and over again" by the "evidence of his own poems"! We are asked to read Shelley's sonnet "Ozymandias," and notice how perfectly, in fourteen brief lines, he paints the "doom of material power." The poem "To-night," will give us an "insight into the spirit of nature," all which and much more of Shelley's poems "contradicts over and over again" his so-called Atheism!

It will be interesting to know what the *Freethinker* admirers of Shelley will find to say about these assertions of the A. S. Lesson Hand Book!

W. T. W.

WHEN WAS HELL MADE?

SIR,—It is very remarkable that in the Bible account of creation there is no mention made of the creation of Hell, and yet Hell is a place of great importance where most of us are doomed to spend eternity, as Jesus Christ assures us. Judging merely by God's ascribed character of omniscience, I am inclined to think that Hell was made prior to the creation of Adam and Eve, because, as God knows everything, past, present and future, he must have been aware that many of the creatures he intended making would so act as to incur his great wrath, and for that reason, according to the view he is credited with by inspired writers, they would have to be eternally tortured. It therefore follows as a matter of probability, that before making these unfortunate wretches, he deemed it expedient to prepare a suitable place for their punishment. Thus, we may imagine, he said "Let there be Hell," and, of course, there was Hell without further to-do. By these three magical words, "Let there be," he called everything else into existence, as we are informed in Holy Writ. This is a bit of Christian theology, deny it who can, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge that Hell is worthy of those who believe in it, and that those who believe in it are equally well worthy of Hell, which, if it exists, ought to be full of all the highly-placed, highly-paid custodians of this hell-fire revelation. Popes and Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, *et hoc genus omne* who could there suitably stew in their own juice. But, as that inimitable humor-

ist, Artemus Ward, would say, this is a goke, for who could deserve such appalling vengeance, except, perhaps, the Christian God, for making this dreadful place, and even for him, to endow for a moment this monstrous invention of folly and ignorance with personality, a short spell of this hideous torture would be quite sufficient. After he had felt what it was like he might be inclined to be more merciful, for, as the poet says, "A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind."

J. E. ROOSE.

Guimbi,
Via Kafue,
Northern Rhodesia.

THE BUDDHA NOT DEIFIED.

SIR,—In the course of his excellent articles on "Spiritualism among Pagan and Savage Races," Mr. George R. Scott says, "Buddha was nothing but a deified priest." This is not so. Siddhattha Gotama, afterwards called the Buddha, was not a priest, nor did he ever pose as such. He belonged, not to the brahmin, but to the warrior, caste. He was never "deified," and is not regarded by Buddhists as a god. Further, we are told that "Buddhism depends almost entirely on conjuring tricks." This is a most erroneous statement. A footnote states: "To this day the Buddhist temple is the home of marvels; and in front of many statues of the Buddha there is a table of china on which an apparatus similar to a planchette is used for ghostly communications." I have lived in Buddhist monasteries, and have spent much time in the temples of Siam, Burma, Ceylon, and even Tibet, but have never seen any "marvels," nor anything resembling a planchette. The Buddha specifically condemned magic, sorcery, and the like, as "low arts of deception." It is true that some later forms of Buddhism became corrupted by the importation of this kind of thing, and that the lamas of Tibet go in for it. But the religion of Tibet is not Buddhism; it is properly described by its modern, European name of Lamaism. True Buddhism is a system of rational, ethical philosophy, rather than a religion as such.

E. J. LAMBL.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

DR. ARTHUR LYNCH'S lecture on "Tom Paine and Edmund Burke" attracted a very fair audience, who expressed unanimously their delight at hearing the story so graphically outlined in Dr. Lynch's inimitable manner. In the discussion some very excellent speeches were delivered. To-night, Mr. Fred Mann delivers a lecture on "Successful Murder."—K.B.K.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH.

IN spite of many counter-attractions, a most successful meeting was held by the Liverpool Branch, at the Picton Hall, on Sunday last, when Mr. Cohen lectured on "The Priest and the Child." The lecturer treated his subject in a refreshingly original manner, and easily obtained the close attention of his audience. Question time showed how entirely convincing Mr. Cohen had been, and we have no doubt that his arguments will be widely diffused by those who had the pleasure of hearing his statement of the Freethought attitude towards a most important question.

To-day (January 21), Mr. J. Farrand will lecture in the Hall at Colquitt Street. His subject will be "The Record of Christianity," and the meeting will commence at 7.30 p.m. Mr. Farrand has previously lectured at this Hall, and we hope all local Freethinkers will make an effort to be present, and to bring a Christian friend.

A.J.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by the first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8): 11.15, Mr. John Murphy—"The Crisis in Catholicism."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Mr. Fred Mann—"Successful Murder."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. W. Sandford—"Pessimism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, Prof. G. Salvemini—"Fascism: Its Meaning and Achievements."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (34, George Street, Manchester Square, W.1): 7.30, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe—"Can a Christian be a Socialist?" Thursday, 7.30 p.m.—Dance at 101 Tottenham Court Road. Admission 1s.

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.0, Messrs. Hyatt and Le Maine; 6.30, Messrs. Campbell-Everden and Jackson. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.0, Mr. Campbell-Everden—A Lecture. Freethought meetings every Wednesday and Friday in Hyde Park, at 7.30. Various Lecturers.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Assembly Rooms, Front Street): 7.15, Mr. Jno. Welsh—"Comparative Anatomy." Chairman: Mr. F. Brown.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. D. S. Currie—"The Hotel in Bethlehem."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Rt. Hon. John M. Robertson—"Fifty Years of Free Thought."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Mr. J. Farrand, B.Com.—"The Record of Christianity."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club Rooms, Arcade, Pilgrim Street): 3.0, Members' Annual Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Meetings held in the Bull Ring on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, at 7 p.m.

OFFERS WANTED for Hannay's "Roman Religion" and complete unbound *Freethinker* for 1927. Cash will be sent to Endowment Trust in buyer's name.—J. W. WOOD, Rozel, Chard, Somerset.

PRIZE Bred Yorkshire and Norwich Canaries for sale. Cocks, 10s., 15s., £1; pairs, £1 and 25s.—W. HOWARD, 1 Hollicondane Terrace, Ramsgate, Kent.

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